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http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/article_93a97de6-1806-53ef-9dce-0edcf1df7949.html

Re-published: Jan. 28, 2015, *Kokomo Tribune* [Page: A4]

http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-gov-s-profile-on-the-rise/article_504b2e1a-a662-11e4-a271-2b216b626518.html

Gov's profile on the rise

Kokomo Tribune

Tuesday, Gov. Mike Pence submitted an application to expand the six-year-old Healthy Indiana Plan with Sylvia Burwell, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

“The private health insurance experience provides an alternative to traditional Medicaid and promotes consumerism by requiring members to make contributions into their accounts,” reads a portion of the executive summary of the waiver application.

The HIP stands in stark contrast to the Affordable Care Act. Passed in 2010, “Obamacare” was the most significant overhaul of the country’s health care system in half a century. Pence is no fan; and he’s not alone in his opposition.

“I have long advocated for the repeal of Obamacare, but any sensible repeal must be accompanied by market-based reforms and a flexible block grant

program for states to administer Medicaid as they see fit,” wrote Pence in a column Thursday for the Kokomo Tribune.

A myriad of troubles have accompanied the ACA’s implementation — from plan cancellations for some, to website failures, to the loss of full-time employment for others. Many of the program’s key features are still finding their footing. However, instead of coming up with an alternative proposal of their own — besides the previous status quo — the GOP majority in the House of Representatives has become “the party of no.”

“While Democrats are struggling with whether to embrace the law or push for changes, Republicans are reminding voters that since they took control of the House in 2011, they’ve voted 54 times to undo, revamp or tweak the law,” according to a March 21 report in The Washington Post by Ed O’Keefe.

Give Pence this much: He, at least, has proposed an alternative. Pence apparently desires a chance at the GOP presidential nomination. This issue is custom-built to boost bona fides with fellow Republicans: Consumers pony up for savings accounts, states are given greater autonomy, private insurance companies are paid handsomely in the form of high deductibles, and America can continue being one of the only developed nations in the world without universal health care.

If Pence can claim victory on this issue, expect his national profile within the party to rise briskly.